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GOD'S DEFENSE RECIPE



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Preparing to Give an Answer: God's Defense Recipe in 1 Peter 3:15

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Article In Brief...

Every Christian should be interested in giving an answer for the hope that is within. This Christian defense is for those who love Christ, who long to see Him upon His return, and who desire to talk about their living, fact-based hope whenever the opportunity presents itself. Prepare yourself to give a Christ-like defense by allowing the epistle of 1 Peter to provide valuable context and commentary on the powerful, apologetics exhortation of 1 Peter 3:15.

THE English word “apologetics” is often confused with the word “apologize,” yet the two words are nearly exact opposites. There certainly is a time and a place for Christians to express regret and apologize for our many mistakes and sins, but Christian apologetics has nothing to do with such remorse. A pitcher in baseball might apologize for hitting a batter with a 90-mile-per-hour fastball (since that’s not an authorized part of the game), but a dodgeball player has no need to say he’s sorry for striking another player with a ball. On the contrary, he may logically defend himself, offering a 180-degree-different kind of “apology.”

The English word “apologetics” is derived from the Greek noun *apologia* meaning a “reply” or “defense,” and the Greek verb *apologeomai* meaning to “defend oneself” and, more specifically, “to speak in

one’s own defense against charges presumed to be false.”¹ More than anyone else in the New Testament, “apologetics” is associated with the apostle Paul. To those in Corinth who questioned Paul’s claim of apostleship, he gave a “defense” (1 Corinthians 9:3). In his joyful letter to the church in Philippi, Paul reminded them that he was “appointed for the defense of the Gospel” (Philippians 1:16-17; 1:7).

A few years before Paul became a follower of Christ, Jesus prophesied that His disciples would “answer” or “defend” the truth of Jesus Christ “before kings and rulers” (Luke 21:14,12). This prophecy came into clear fulfillment during Paul’s missionary journeys and imprisonments (cf. Acts 9:15), as the Lord used him to reason with and “reply” before all manner of rulers.² Before Governor Felix, Paul gave an “answer” (NKJV) or “defense” (NASB). About two

years later, Paul “made his defense” (NIV) before Governor Festus (Acts 25:8), and then again before Festus and King Agrippa II (26:1-2), even denying Festus’ charge of insanity by pointing out that his *apologia* was grounded in “truth and reason” (26:25).

Though the word *apologia* is used only once in the New Testament in association with the apostle Peter, it is this apostle (Peter, and not Paul) whom the Holy Spirit used to give us perhaps the most complete (yet concise) picture of God-approved defenders of Christianity. Peter used the term *apologia* one time in 1 Peter, yet the apostle clearly details how Christians are to be Christ-like defenders. Indeed, Peter gives the Lord’s Church a perfect recipe for defending divine doctrine.

To Christians who were scattered throughout various parts of the northern half of Asia Minor in roughly the early-to-mid 60s A.D. (1:1),³ Peter wrote: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to **give a defense** to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (3:15).

WRITTEN TO CHRISTIANS, NOT “CLERGY”

WHILE Jesus and the apostle Paul are the two premier apologists in Scripture, we must not make the tragic mistake of thinking that apologetics is only for “the preacher.” Too many Christians for far too long have incorrectly **assumed** that “ordained clergy” are those engaged in Christian apologetics—not the “regular Christian” husband and wife, mom and dad, or the baker, banker, and bus driver. Peter makes clear in his first epistle that he was writing, not to “apostles, prophets, and preachers,” but to Christians (1 Peter 4:16)—to “pilgrims” (1:1), the “elect” (1:2), the “begotten”

(1:3), “children” of God (1:14). He was writing to any and all of God’s people in various provinces in Asia Minor—followers of Christ whom he describes as “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people” (2:9). In this letter, Peter specifically addressed various members of the body of Christ, including servants (2:18-25), wives (3:1-6), husbands (3:7), elders (5:1), and “younger people” (5:5). But overall, he was addressing “you” (1 Peter 5:1)⁴—Christians in local churches.

After expressly challenging “husbands” (1 Peter 3:7) to honor their wives and be the kind of godly men in the home that the Lord calls them to be,⁵ Peter went back to addressing “all of you” (3:8). When he wrote “always be ready to give a defense” (3:15), Peter was not addressing evangelists. He was not challenging some “special class of clergy.” He was talking to “all” Christians, to “followers of what is good” (3:13), to those who have been baptized in water for the remission of sins (3:20-21; cf. Acts 2:38).

Certainly, there are essential leadership roles for elders, deacons, and evangelists to fulfill in the Lord’s Church.⁶ Peter, in fact, has some very important commands for elders in chapter 5. However, the “defense” instruction of 1 Peter 3:15 is for **all** disciples of Christ.

When “a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem” several years earlier, “all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria” (Acts 8:1).⁷ What did these dispersed disciples of Christ do? They “went everywhere preaching (*euangelizo*) the word” (Acts 8:4). They evangelized! “There is no evidence, nor is there any probability, that all these persons were ‘ordained’ to preach.”⁸ They were “just members” of the Church of Christ: “ordinary,” “common Christians.”¹⁰ Likewise, the dis-

persed **Christians** in Asia Minor to whom Peter wrote to “always be ready to give a defense” were just that—“Christians.” Indeed, Christian apologetics is for **all** of God’s people!

FOR SINCERE SAINTS, NOT COUNTERFEIT CHRISTIANS

FURTHERMORE, according to Peter, Christian apologetics is for those with a “good conscience” who exemplify genuine, “good conduct in Christ” (1 Peter 3:16). Like Peter,¹¹ Christians are imperfect people who stumble and fall along the way. Yet, we are to be **real** people of God, who “walk in the light” and “confess our sins” to one another (1 John 1:7,9; James 5:16). Having been “redeemed...with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:18-19) and “called...out of darkness,” conscientious, God-approved Christian defenders walk in “His marvelous light” (2:9), “**laying aside all...hypocrisy**” (2:1). “[A]s obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts...but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct” (1:14-15).

Much of the time, long before any non-Christian listens to an *apologia* from a disciple of Christ, he will have inspected (to some degree) the life of this “so-called Christian.” Thus, Peter says to “abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, **having your conduct honorable** among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, **by your good works which they observe**, glorify God in the day of visitation” (2:12).¹² In fact, it could be that for some (and perhaps many) unbelievers much less “defense” would be necessary in their conversion if they first saw continual, sincere righteous living on the part of the Christian. Only a few verses prior to 1 Peter 3:15, the apostle noted how some unbelieving

husbands “**without a word** may be won by the **conduct** of their wives, when they **observe** your chaste conduct” (3:1-2).¹³

Consider that before the apostle Paul ever wrote to Timothy, instructing him to “preach the word” and “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Timothy 4:2,5), he **first** highlighted the vital “**genuine** [unhypocritical]”¹⁴ faith that is in you” (2 Timothy 1:5). Furthermore, years prior to Paul penning 2 Timothy, he desired this young servant of Christ to accompany him on his second missionary journey. Note carefully, however, that Paul only wanted this **after** coming to learn that Timothy “was well spoken of by the brethren” (Acts 16:2-3). Indeed, God’s recipe for Christian apologetics includes, first and foremost, this primary ingredient: a **sincere** saint.

It should come as no surprise that just before Peter commanded Christians to “be ready to give a defense,” he first said to “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts” (3:15). To “sanctify” (*hagiazō*) is “to treat as holy,” to regard in “reverence.”¹⁵ The word “sanctify” is derived from the Greek *hagios*, which pertains to “being dedicated or consecrated to the service of God.”¹⁶ Similar to Jesus’ prayer to the Father, “**hallowed** (*hagiazō*) be Your name” (Matthew 6:9), Peter said, “**sanctify** Christ as Lord in your hearts” (NASB). Peter was actually quoting from Isaiah 8:13: “The Lord of hosts, Him you shall **hallow**” (Hebrew *qadash*). How do we “hallow,” “sanctify,” or “set apart as holy” the Lord? Since God is by His very nature 100% “holy” (1:16) and needs absolutely no help from humanity in being holy, in what sense do we set Him apart as holy?

Peter said to sanctify the Lord “**in your hearts**.” Of the millions of thoughts that flood our minds, of all the memories, people, and things we hold dear in our hearts,

One is specially set apart far and above all others—in the center of our being, on the throne of our hearts—the King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus Christ. God wants Christians to give a defense **only after** they have hallowed Christ in their lives. Not an outward, hollow “holiness,” which manifests itself in “going through the motions” with Pharisee-like actions, but an inward, genuine, heart-felt reverence for Jesus Christ, which naturally impacts everything the Christian does—how we think, act, and talk—including how we “give a defense.” Sooner or later, hypocrisy only harms the Christian’s influence and defense, while an authentic surrendering to Jesus as Lord of our lives is the greatest aid in the apologist’s arsenal. “Sanctify” first; “Defend” second: always, always in that order.

COURAGEOUS, GOD- FEARING FOLLOWERS

PETER also detailed that genuine faithfulness from the inside-out is fundamental to Christian apologetics because followers of Christ often are called upon to give a defense **in trying times**. Peter knew a thing or two about suffering. Very soon after the establishment of the Church in Acts 2, Peter and John were repeatedly arrested, imprisoned, interrogated, threatened, and beaten (Acts 4-5). Peter was in Jerusalem during a time when “a great persecution arose against the church...at Jerusalem,” as Saul “made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison” (Acts 8:1,3). Later, when “Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church,” including killing the apostle James, the king then arrested and imprisoned Peter (Acts 12:1-4), very likely with the intention of killing him, too (were it not for Peter’s

divine deliverance from prison—Acts 12:5-19).

The Lord used this often-persecuted apostle to pen a letter to distressed Christians (likely sometime between A.D. 64-68)¹⁷ during the reign of the Roman Emperor Nero. Though there may not have been widespread, official imperial persecutions of Christians until a few decades later, Nero was no friend to Christians. The historian Tacitus (who was also no fan of Christianity) noted how Nero, in A.D. 64, blamed Christians for the Great Fire in Rome. According to Tacitus: “Nero fabricated scapegoats—and punished with every refinement the notoriously depraved Christians (as they were popularly called).”¹⁸ Whether Peter had this or other Roman persecutions in mind when writing 1 Peter, we do not know. Regardless, as the book of Acts reveals, persecution was present in one place or another since the birth of the Lord’s Church, and the Christian “pilgrims of the Dispersion” in Asia Minor were not exempt. It seems they had already endured some difficulties (1:6-7), and Peter forewarned that more lay on the horizon.

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you.... But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.... Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator (4:12-19).

Peter’s apologetics exhortation is firmly and deeply embedded in an epistle and immediate context of suffering. In the verses directly before and after 1 Peter 3:15, the apostle speaks of imminent Christian persecution: “when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed” (3:16). “And even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed” (3:14; cf. Matthew 5:10-12). We are blessed if we endure suffering innocently¹⁹ like Christ²⁰ (2:19-24). We are blessed if such suffering brings spiritual maturity and heavenly clarity in an otherwise potentially “cares-of-this-world” kind of earthly, sinful focus on life. Furthermore, we are blessed to grow spiritually from such suffering, including increasing in courage for Christ. In fact, Peter directly connected “suffering” (3:14a) and apologetics (3:15) **with being courageous**, as he quoted from Isaiah 8:12, saying, “And **do not be afraid** of their threats, nor be troubled” (3:14b).

Rather than cower fearfully in the face of manmade persecution and allow such fear to warp how we think, live, and “give a defense,” Isaiah challenged his hearers to **fear God**. “The Lord of hosts, Him you shall hallow; let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread” (Isaiah 8:13). Peter includes these thoughts both at the beginning and end of 1 Peter 3:15: (a) “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts” (which we’ve already examined), and (b) giving a defense “with...**fear**.” This “fear” is not in sinful fear of what man (or Satan) might do. Jesus explained: “[D]o not fear them.... Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. **But rather fear Him** who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew

10:26-28). Indeed, as Peter rhetorically asked, “And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?... Do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled” (3:13-14). After all, as Peter reminded these young churches of the words of Psalm 34, our omniscient, omnipotent God is bigger than any problem that may come our way: “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil” (3:12). Thus, “fear” God (1 Peter 1:17; 2:17; 3:15). As we “speak in the light” (Matthew 10:27) about the joy of our salvation, our total respect, reverence, and genuine, soul-stirring awe for our Savior and King serves as the rock-solid foundation of our *apologia*.

Is it not encouraging that God used the imperfect (but penitent) Peter to write these words? Recall that Peter cowered on the Sea of Galilee, fearfully denied Jesus three times, and even had a hypocritical moment later in life when he, for fear of some Jewish Christians, played favoritism and shunned his Gentile brethren (Galatians 2:11-14). It is this apostle (likely toward the end of his life) whom the Holy Spirit used to exhort struggling, flawed followers of Christ to courageously stand their ground, to “not be afraid,” and to “**always** be ready to give a defense to **everyone** who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.” Indeed, regardless of “whenever, wherever, and by whomever it is challenged,”²¹ we must speak up and explain the “reason for the hope” that is in us.

FULL OF HOPE, WITH EYES ON THE PRIZE

IN one very real sense, biblical, Christian apologetics is not an intimidating graduate course or an overwhelming 800-page step-by-step book on how to answer nearly every challenge under the Sun. It’s

not some dreaded Bible study or debate. The *apologia* of 1 Peter 3:15 is the **natural response** to the Lord being #1 in our lives (which at some point will likely include great books, classes, studies, and possible debates). Christian apologetics, on the most basic level, is the **natural response** of being in love with the Lord and living as sojourners in a foreign land with our eyes on the prize. Does a young woman who is righteously head-over-heels in love with her fiancé not have a **natural** glow and excitement about her? Is she not ready to defend and tell the world about her one love who is soon to sweep her off her feet and take her across the threshold of their new home? Likewise, the child of God loves to talk about her Father. The once-dead sinner loves to talk about his Savior. The bride of Christ loves to talk about her Husband and the reasons for her confident expectation of seeing Him face to face in heaven one day.

Peter called the Christians in Asia Minor “pilgrims” (1:1; 2:11) and “sojourners” (2:11). He reminded them how to conduct themselves “**throughout the time of your stay**

here” (1:17). The simple yet profound fact about life on Earth is, we are all “just passing through” (like a brief stay in a hotel). Christians, however, live here with hope (the full expectation) of receiving (by the grace of God) “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (1:4). As the sojourner Abraham left his homeland to dwell “in a foreign country” and “waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:9-10), “**our citizenship is in heaven**, from which we also **eagerly wait** for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20). Many a dying, non-Christian has longed for some kind of “hope” of happiness after this life is over; the faithful child of God is overjoyed to “give a defense...for the hope” that is in us.

A HOPE ANCHORED FIRMLY IN FACTS

THOUGH the genuine hope of the Christian stirs up the strongest of emotions,²² do not make the grave mistake of thinking that the Christian’s hope is founded on emotion. **Nothing**

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could be further from the truth. Our feelings are founded on facts. Our hope is firmly anchored in the truths of the Gospel—of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Peter was clear, saying, “[W]e did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitness of His majesty” (2 Peter 1:16). When Peter and the apostles were accused of being drunk on the first Pentecost following the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:13), Peter responded with a reasoned defense, not a mere emotional appeal. He reminded his hearers that God “attested” (*apodeidegmenon*) to the miracles that Jesus worked while He was alive and in their midst (Acts 2:22). That is, God “demonstrated”²³ proof of the divine origin, message, and mission of Christ in such a way that people could actually see the evidence and make an informed, rational decision about Him (cf. John 10:37-38).

What’s more, the assembly on Pentecost knew that Jesus had been “put to death” only days earlier (Acts 2:23), but unlike the tomb of King David, Jesus’ tomb was empty only three days later. Unlike the body of David, which saw corruption, the dead body of Christ had been raised and would never see corruption. Yes, Peter directed the assembly to evaluate the **evidence** for Jesus’ resurrection, including the implied empty tomb (Acts 2:24,29-32), the fulfillment of Psalm 16:8-11 (Acts 2:25-31), and the witnesses who stood before them testifying that they had actually seen the risen Savior (Acts 2:32).

The nearly 3,000 individuals who obeyed the Gospel on Pentecost were not swayed by flowery words, phony miracles, or mere emotional appeals. They were “cut to the heart” by evidence-based

preaching. They reacted to a sermon filled with sensible argumentation and properly applied Scriptures.²⁴ They responded to the *apologia* of Christ—to Christian apologetics.

About 30 years following the events in Acts 2, Peter reminded the persecuted Christian pilgrims in 1 Peter that the hope for which they were to give a defense is a “living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1:3). Indeed, the evidence proves that “God...raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God” (1:21).

PREPARE TO ANSWER

SINCE our hope is evidence-based, it is paramount to learn the reasons for our hope—for our own eternal benefit and for the benefit of others (as we teach and answer questions). Unlike the miraculously inspired apostles to whom Jesus said, “Therefore settle it in your hearts **not** to meditate beforehand on what you will answer (*apologeomai*); for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist” (Luke 21:14-15), **Christians today must prepare themselves** to give a defense. We must “get ready.”

Peter said, “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God” (4:11). If so, then we must first learn the Word of God. We first learn enough to reasonably conclude why we should become Christians—“having been born again...through the word of God” (1:23). Then, “like newborn babes, **desire** the pure milk of the word, **that you may grow thereby**” (2:2). After all, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). When

Jesus was challenged by Satan, the Lord quoted Scripture and used it accurately (Matthew 4:1-11). When Jesus was challenged by the Pharisees and others, He logically pointed out flaws in their irrational arguments, while also making perfect reference to and application of the Old Testament (cf. Matthew 5; 12:1-14,22-30). Indeed, “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). As we patiently prepare ourselves to answer those who ask us a reason for the hope that is in us, let’s “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

DEFEND WITH THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

IN our reasoning with others of the hope that is in us, we must keep in mind what Peter noted at the end of 1 Peter 3:15—that our defense is to be made “with meekness and fear.” Christians are to try to be Christ-like at all times, including when we defend the truth. Our teaching is to be characterized “with gentleness and reverence” (3:15, NASB). We are to “honor all people” as we “fear God” (2:17). As we “proclaim the praises of Him” who called us “out of darkness into His marvelous light,” we must be “clothed with humility” (2:9; 5:5).

About 15 years ago, a man who identified himself as a Catholic priest wrote an unsolicited letter to Apologetics Press. We had never heard of this gentleman before reading his note. Although, sadly, he is very misled in his adherence to Catholic doctrine,²⁵ consider some of his analysis of a handful of preachers in the Church of Christ. [NOTE: He refers to preachers as “elders.”]

As a Roman Catholic priest who follows non-Catholic religions with some interest...I have observed a lot of meanness, rudeness, and lack of basic civility among CoC [Church of Christ—EL] elders, especially recently. How does one explain this? In general (no doubt there are exceptions perhaps many), Christian love seems deficient in the way they seek to promote truth.

In general, they strike me as tending to be suspicious, rash and uncharitable in their judgments about other people's motives, prone to arrogance, and even too eager to call someone a liar, more so than the average pagan in the streets. These comments are based on only my limited experience, to be sure, and sometimes, no doubt, I am guilty of some of the very same sins and character flaws.

I was considering doing some kind of oral interaction with an elder or two about Catholic matters. Now it looks to me like this would be a royal invitation to verbal abuse, misrepresentation, and even character assassination....

Some members of the Lord's Church might tend to dismiss this criticism with a wave of the hand, but we believe this gentleman was right in his assessment and denouncement of some who attempt to "defend the truth" yet do so in an unchristlike manner.²⁶ What's more, we **all** need to be reminded of the necessity and seriousness of "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). We must examine ourselves and ensure that our teachings and defense of the truth are done lovingly and patiently, confidently yet kindly, neither rudely nor arrogantly (1 Corinthians 13).

Keep in mind what the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy shortly before commanding him to "preach the word" (2 Timothy 4:2). He described "a servant of the Lord" as one who "must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition" (2 Timothy 2:24-25).

Peter repeatedly reminds Christians to be humble in all areas of life. We are to be submissive to governing authorities (2:13), to masters (2:18), (wives) to husbands (3:1), to elders (5:5), and in general "to one another" (5:5).²⁷ With this same submissive spirit, Christians are called upon to give a defense "with gentleness and reverence" (3:15, NASB). Yes, let's teach and preach while being "clothed with humility, for 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (3:5-6).

CONCLUSION

FIRST Peter 3:15 is embedded within a marvelous epistle that provides clear context and commentary on a perfect apologetics passage. Every sincere-hearted Christian should draw encouragement from this verse to follow God courageously in the face of suffering and persecution. With a Christ-like attitude, with our eyes firmly fixed on the ultimate prize, and with our hope anchored in the facts of the Gospel, we, indeed, can give a reasonable defense. And, we can rejoice in the fact that honest and good-hearted unbelievers will eventually "glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Peter 2:12).

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Frederick Danker, et al. (2000), *Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago), pp. 116-117.
- ² Including teaching Sergius Paulus, the proconsul of Cyprus (Acts 13:4-12), on his first missionary journey and standing before Gallio, proconsul of Achaia (Acts 18:11-17), on his second missionary journey.
- ³ All chapter and verse citations that do not have a Bible book listed are from 1 Peter.
- ⁴ The phrase "among you" in this verse is another clear indication that he was writing to "regular Christians."
- ⁵ Not cruel masters who lord over their wives, but Christ-like men who (are commanded to) "dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered" (3:7).
- ⁶ Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Philipians 1:1; Ephesians 4:11-12.
- ⁷ NIV.
- ⁸ Albert Barnes (1997), *Notes on the Old and New Testaments: Acts* (Electronic Database: BibleSoft).
- ⁹ R.C.H. Lenski (2001), *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles*, (US: Hendrickson), p. 314.
- ¹⁰ Barnes.
- ¹¹ Matthew 27:69-75; Galatians 2:11-14.
- ¹² It seems likely that this "day of visitation" is a reference to the day that a non-Christian becomes a child of God—when the Lord would, in a sense,

SPEAKING SCHEDULES

Kyle Butt

May 1-2	Rosenberg, TN	(281) 341-7776
May 16	Glen, MS	(662) 287-3328
May 22-23	Conyers, GA	(770) 922-8341

Eric Lyons

May 23	Wetumpka, AL	(334) 567-6561
May 27	Memphis, TN	(901) 751-2444

Dave Miller

April 30-May 2	West Palm Beach, FL	(561) 848-1111
May 9	Montgomery, AL	(334) 264-2985

Jeff Miller

May 1	Readyville, TN	(615) 895-2265
May 4,6,11,13	Denver, CO	(303) 986-5800
May 16	Montgomery, AL	(334) 264-2985
May 21-23	West Palm Beach, FL	(561) 848-1111
May 30-June 5	Branson, MO	(417) 334-3866

“visit me with Your salvation” (Psalm 10-6:4).

¹³ Considering how many Christians, including countless church leaders, have struggled with sexual purity, Peter’s repeated reminders to be “chaste,” “pure,” and “holy in all your conduct” cannot be overemphasized. Disciples of Christ who fail to put away lewdness, lusts, revelries, etc. (4:3), and who hypocritically “give a defense,” do (and have done!) much damage to the cause of Christ. Sadly, this damage can be exponentially greater in our day of instant Internet search engines, 24-hour news coverage, and social media.

¹⁴ From the Greek *anupokritos*, which is from *hupokrites* (from which we get our English word “hypocrite”).

¹⁵ Danker, p. 10.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

¹⁷ Cf. Peter Davids (1990), *The First Epistle of Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p. 10.

¹⁸ Tacitus (1952 reprint), *The Annals and the Histories*, trans. Michael Grant (Chicago: William Benton), 15.44, parenthetical comment in orig.

¹⁹ Though on an imperfect, fallen level (Romans 3:23).

²⁰ Who did so on a flawless level.

²¹ Dick Sztanyo, as quoted in Kyle Butt (2001), “What Is Apologetics?” <https://www.apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=12&article=826>.

²² From excitement for what’s to come after this life is over, to the joy of talking about it, to sadness for those who do not currently have it.

²³ R.J. Knowling (2002), *The Expositor’s Greek New Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), 2:82.

²⁴ See Dave Miller (2019), *Is Christianity Logical?* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press), pp. 49-50.

²⁵ Moises Pinedo (2008), *What the Bible Says About the Catholic Church* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press), https://apologeticspress.org/pdfs/e-books_pdf/wtbsatcc.pdf.

²⁶ We actually know the handful of preachers to whom he was referring, as other parts of his letter revealed their identity. It is also noteworthy that the Catholic priest humbly acknowledged his own shortcomings in his critique.

²⁷ An apologist is no more to be arrogant than an elder is to be domineering (1 Peter 5:3).

Lot's Daughters

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

[**Editor’s Note:** The following article is taken from a soon-to-be-released book *Hidden Meanings Buried in the Bible.*]

A horrifying incident is recorded during the lifetime of Abraham involving his nephew Lot and the angelic visitors who came to Lot to warn him to flee the city:

Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot and said to him, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally.” So Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him, and said, “Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly! See now, **I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish;** only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof” (Genesis 19:4-9).

The western mind—indeed, the Christian mind—has difficulty processing this incident, specifically, the callous, despicable behavior of Lot regarding his daughters.

One must remember that pre-Christian civilizations did not possess the refined moral sensibilities that a nation like America has enjoyed. Generally, the pagan societies of human history have engaged in all sorts of wicked, depraved, dehumanizing, and savage behaviors that were considered by those cultures to be perfectly appropriate. Consider, for example, those societies that have practiced cannibalism—including a number of American Indian tribal groups¹—literally devouring other human beings and forcing others to do the same. Likewise, many cultures have had disgusting family relationships and relaxed sexual mores that are jarring to the Christian mind.² As

astonishing and objectionable to us—completely inexcusable and unjustifiable—as it may seem for a father to sacrifice his own daughters in such a fashion, it verifies the fact that the unnatural lust of homosexuality was considered far more repugnant than even illicit heterosexuality.

Nevertheless, scholars have documented the fact that Lot’s rationale was rooted in a cultural norm that informed his decision. The biblical notion of hospitality is given a prominent position in Christian thinking and behavior. It is imperative that God’s people “practice hospitality” (Romans 12:13; cf. Romans 16:23; 1 Timothy 5:10; 1 Peter 4:9; 3 John 8). One cannot even be considered for the high church office of elder without possessing this critical quality (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8). Americans have practiced a number of cultural amenities that manifest hospitality, including taking a guest’s coat, offering something to drink, indicating the location of the restroom, and offering for the guest to be seated. But Lot was being more than just hospitable. He was acting in harmony with a deeply honored obligation of antiquity—what Clarke referred to as “that sacred light in which the **rights** of hospitality were regarded among the eastern nations.”³ “A guest was sacred and his person inviolable.”⁴ These rights required him to protect the lives of those whom he had “taken in” for hospitable purposes **at all costs**. He was to protect his guests—even with his own life.⁵

In his *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands*, Fred Wight explains: “In the lands of the East, when a host accepts a man to be his guest he thereby agrees **at whatever the cost to defend his guest from all possible enemies during the time of his entertainment.**”⁶ Based upon

his travels to Egypt and Palestine to visit biblical sites, H. Clay Trumbull, Lyman Beecher Lecturer at Yale Divinity School, wrote in his *Studies in Oriental Social Life* about an occurrence of this very custom. An American missionary visited in the home of a Turkish governor who handed the American a piece of roast mutton and stated: “By that act I have pledged you **every drop of my blood**, that while you are in my territory no evil shall come to you. For that space of time we are brothers.”⁷ In the Oriental mind, hospitality is “the virtue of virtues,” “the trait of traits,” and involves “a profound sense of obligation to a principle.”⁸

Lot hinted at this profound commitment when he reminded the mob: “only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason **they have come under the shadow of my roof**” (Genesis 19:8). The word “shadow” refers to the sacred duty of protection that Lot was under obligation to provide.⁹ English translations render the phrase: “They have come to my house, and I must protect them,”¹⁰ “I am responsible for them,”¹¹ “They have come under the protection of my roof.”¹² Hence, from the perspective of the Oriental mindset, Lot was “a courageous champion of the obligations of hospitality in a situation of extreme embarrassment.”¹³

But the Eastern commitment to the principle of hospitality went even further. The Eastern tribal groups known as the Khonds possess the same passion for hospitality, as reflected in this Khond proverb: “For the safety of a guest, life and honor are pledged; he is to be considered **before a child**.”¹⁴ This perspective, indeed, this narrow-minded fixation, explains the absurd behavior of Lot in the treatment of his daughters.

The virtue of hospitality has a pre-eminence, in its obligations and in its significance, **not recognized to the same extent elsewhere in the world at large**.... In the primitive East, hospitality is more far-reaching in its scope and more exacting in its obligations than anything which

we know of under that name in the conventional West.¹⁵

Of course, this “exaggerated emphasis on hospitality”¹⁶ to the neglect of his obligations of fatherhood does not make Lot’s actions appropriate—let alone sanctioned by God.¹⁷ Even if we postulate that he didn’t expect the mob to accept his offer—due to their depraved sexual proclivities—even **making** the offer is unacceptable and to be viewed as unconscionable. We might add, however, that if the choice came down to preserving the lives of his guests versus preserving the lives of his daughters, and if the lives of the guests took precedence over the lives of himself and his own family (Leviticus 19:18; Mark 12:31), we can at least understand that all human life, whether the lives of those closest to us or the lives of those who are complete strangers, is equally valuable—even if we question which should be preserved over the other. Since God does not sanction situation ethics,¹⁸ Lot’s predicament should not be viewed as an “either/or” situation. He should have sought to preserve all lives committed to his charge, refusing to compromise with the depraved mob. In any case, awareness of the peculiar notions of the Asiatic mindset at the time regarding hospitality helps us at least to make sense of Lot’s bizarre offer, though we reject it as completely unacceptable to God.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Thomas H. Maugh (2000), “Conclusive Evidence of American Indian Cannibalism Found,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 7, <https://archive.seattletimes.com/archive/?date=20000907&slug=4041058>. See Dave Miller (2017), *God & Government* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press), pp. 318-319.
- ² See Miller (2017), pp. 317-318 for instances of depraved practices of the Indian tribes in 18th century America. The “Eskimos” of Alaska practiced wife swapping as an expression of etiquette—see Lawrence Hennigh (1970) “Functions and Limitations of Alaskan Eskimo Wife Trading,” *Arctic*, 23[1]:24-34, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40507675>; Arthur J. Rubel (1961), “Partnership and Wife-Exchange Among the Eskimo and Aleut of

Northern North America,” *Anthropological Papers of the University of Alaska*, 10[1]:59-72, <https://www.uaf.edu/apua/files/Rubel1961.pdf>.

- ³ Adam Clarke (no date), *Clarke’s Commentary: Genesis-Deuteronomy* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury), 1:123, emp. added. Also “the **sacred** rite of hospitality...the **sanctity** of hospitality”—C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch (1976 reprint), *Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 1:233. See also Mary Rogers (1865), *Domestic Life in Palestine* (Cincinnati, OH: Poe & Hitchcock), p. 237, who was told when visiting a home in Palestine, “This house is your house, and we are at your service.”
- ⁴ Wilfrid J. Moulton (1920), “The Social Institutions of Israel,” in *A Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Arthur Peake (London: T.C. & E.C. Jack), p. 110.
- ⁵ Thomas Whitelaw (1950), *The Pulpit Commentary: Genesis*, ed. H.D.M. Spence and Joseph Exell (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 1:253, emp. added; E. Harold Browne (1873), *Genesis, or The First Book of Moses* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co.), p. 127.
- ⁶ Fred Wight (1953), *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press), p. 78, emp. added.
- ⁷ H. Clay Trumbull (1895), *Studies in Oriental Social Life* (London: Hodder & Stoughton), p. 110, emp. added.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81, 99. The term “oriental” is used by scholars to refer to the peoples that live in a large area consisting of Eastern Turkey to Central India, and from Northern Persia to Southern Arabia (Trumbull, p. 74).
- ⁹ Koehler, et al., pp. 1024-1025.
- ¹⁰ ERV, EXB, ICB, NCV.
- ¹¹ GW, NCB.
- ¹² CSB, CEB, EHV, HCSB, NET, NIV, TLV.
- ¹³ John Skinner (1925), *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons), revised edition, p. 307.
- ¹⁴ Trumbull, p. 98, emp. added; J.T. Gracey (1882), “Khonds” in *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, ed. John M’Clintock and James Strong (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1969 reprint), 5:72-73. While the Khonds lived in India—quite some distance from Palestine—they still serve as an example of the Eastern mindset as it relates to the obligations of hospitality.
- ¹⁵ Trumbull, p. 74, emp. added.
- ¹⁶ H.C. Leupold (1950 reprint), *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), 1:559.
- ¹⁷ See the discussion of why the Bible would label Lot as “righteous” in Eric Lyons (2008), “Righteous Lot?”, Apologetics Press, <https://www.apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=23&article=2400>.
- ¹⁸ Dave Miller (2004), “Situation Ethics—Extended Version,” Apologetics Press, <https://www.apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=7&article=645&topic=38>.



NOTE FROM *The Editor*



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Dave Miller

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